

Good Afternoon! I am honored to be in this position in front of you today. My name is Anthony Perez-Pino, and I am a second year student at the UConn School of Dental Medicine. Uttering these words never fails to fill my heart with warmth, fulfillment and pride. I immensely appreciate you all for taking the time to hear our voices during this hearing. I hope that my testimony can illustrate how strongly I feel about this institution and the opportunities it has given me. I am forever grateful.

I was born and raised in warm Miami, Florida. To be honest, if you would have told me that I would be living in Farmington, Connecticut a few years ago, I would have probably laughed. Little did I know, that I was going to be attending a world-class institution and become the man I have always aspired to be.

When I began applying to dental schools, I had high ambitions for where I wanted to go. Fortunately, as an undergraduate student, I was extremely dedicated and persistent towards setting myself up for the next stage in my academic career. I knew that I wanted to be the best clinician I could possibly be in order to serve others. Once the time came to apply to dental schools, I knew I had an exceptional application that would garner the attention of many dental schools. This led me to do extremely diligent research on every dental program in the country.

During this stage of my application process, I quickly realized that UConn is one of the premier institutions in the country. There are countless opportunities to take advantage of in the realms of community service, research, brilliant professors, leadership, mentoring, state of the art resources, and more. Not only this, but the program is extremely affordable, offering out of state residents the opportunity to apply for in-state tuition after the first year. I also knew that it was an extremely competitive program, and getting in as an out-of-state applicant would be very difficult. I decided to apply anyway. This would prove to be one of my best life decisions to date!

During my interview stage, many schools did not meet my expectations. Others superseded them. UConn was by far my most impressive interview experience, and there was not even a close second. The relatively small class size, student to faculty ratio, overall comradery between students, resources offered to students, nationally renowned faculty, residency match rates, specialization rates, and countless other features really made this school stand out.

On acceptance day, I was accepted to many of the schools I applied to. I even received a “Dean’s Scholarship” from a prestigious Ivy-League school. However, I made the easy decision to attend the UConn for the aforementioned reasons. Since then, I have grown so much as a person and have had endless rewarding/enriching experiences.

Our academic curriculum is very rigorous. Admittedly, it was quite overwhelming handling this curriculum while moving to a different state where I had no connections in the middle of a pandemic. However, the resources the school offered, as well as the amazing culture amongst the student body really helped me get through this struggle.

The pandemic offered many obstacles for every person on this planet. UConn was not spared from these obstacles. However, they seamlessly transitioned into a hybrid online/in-

person curriculum that did not compromise my education in any way. Additionally, the school went above and beyond to still provide their students with the resources they need in order to have a normal dental school experience. Without the help from the Appropriations Committee, the school would have not been able to accomplish this.

Once I found my stride, I began to utilize the resources that UConn had to offer. I began to get involved in research, school organizations, and community service. This involvement has been so rewarding, and is making my dental school experience extremely special. Currently, I am working on two research projects that have a high likelihood of getting published. I wouldn't be able to do this without the help of my brilliant mentors as well as the school-provided funding. Our findings will certainly make an impact on the dental profession!

In addition, I am heavily involved in school leadership positions. I was the first year representative for our school's American Student Dental Association (ASDA) chapter, and I am currently the second year ASDA representative, the social co-chair for the Latino Medical Student Association (LMSA), student recruitment coordinator for the Hartford Health Education (HHE) program for high school students, teacher for the HHE program, member of the Hispanic Student Dental Association (HSDA) Hispanic Heritage Month Committee, as well as the Mini Medical Spanish Committee for the LMSA. Lastly, and most importantly, I have seized many opportunities to be involved in community service through our school. I have attended almost every community service offered through ASDA, helped provide dental screenings at the Urban Ecology Wellness Center in Hartford on numerous occasions, volunteered at the Amberwoods Skilled Nursing Facility to combat elderly loneliness, mentored students at Farmington High School about the process of becoming a dentist, taught classes on health topics at Annie Fisher Montessori School, taught at the HCOP Saturday Doctor Academy for young students wishing to pursue health care careers, and volunteered at the South Park Inn Dental Clinic in Hartford. These experiences have been extremely rewarding and have undoubtedly influenced the lives of many individuals in Connecticut.

I list all of these things because I want to demonstrate how many resources this school has to offer. They are endless! I often find myself wanting to get involved with even more activities, but there is only so much time in a day. I currently have ambitions to pursue a career in orthodontics. Through my experience at UConn, I have realized that I am very passionate about serving my community, being a leader, learning/improving my craft, and working with the developing minds of young children and adolescents. All of these resources have been available, despite the pandemic, and I am very grateful for this.

It is because of your help that we are able to have such an enriching experience as students. I truly believe that every dollar that UConn is granted, is used in the most appropriate and efficient manner. Because of this, UConn is a premier institution, which attracts hopeful, ambitious dreamers like myself. I have to pinch myself sometimes when I reflect on where I am today and the experiences I have had at this school. I am delighted to serve and make an impact in the state of Connecticut. All of this is, once again, due to your help.

Thank you for listening to myself and my colleagues

With immense gratitude,

Anthony Perez-Pino